THE NEW
SUNDAY EXPRESS

BENGALURU • SUNDAY • MARCH 16, 2025 • ₹12.00 • PAGES 26 • LATE CITY EDITION

READ SHARE FOLLOW
newindianexpress.com
facebook.com/thenewindianexpress twitter.com/newindianexpress
instagram.com/newindianexpress

SPACEX LAUNCHES CREW TO RESCUE TWO ASTRONAUTS STUCK IN SPACE

SpaceX launches a crew to replace NASA's stranded astronauts — Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams — paving way for their return after nine long months

CREW TO OVERLAP FOR SMOOTHER HANDOVER

The relief craft is expected to dock into the ISS by Saturday night (US time). NASA wants an overlap so Suni and Butch can brief the newcomers on station operations. Their departure along with two others is planned for next week, with a splashdown off Florida, finally bringing an end to their unexpected nine-month mission in space

4 ASTRONAUTS TO SPEND SIX MONTHS IN SPACE

- Four astronauts, including two military pilots, will spend six months aboard the ISS after freeing the stranded duo
- SpaceX's new capsule needed battery repairs, delaying the launch. To save time, it switched to a used capsule, moving Wilmore and Williams' return to mid-March

9
SPACEWALKS MADE WILLIAMS THE WOMEN'S RECORD-HOLDER

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

High-level CEC meet on linking Aadhaar, voter ID

It's at variance with EC's line in SC in 2023

PREETHA NAIR @New Delhi

AMID a row over voter lists, Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar has called a high-level meeting on Tuesday to discuss the linking of the voter identity card with the Aadhaar card. According to sources, the CEC will discuss the matter with the Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Legislative Department Secretary Rajiv Mani and UIDAI CEO Bhuvnesh Kumar on March 18.

This is at variance with the EC's earlier position. In September 2023, the EC told the Supreme Court that the submission of Aadhaar number is not mandatory under Rule 26-B of the Registration of Electors (Amendment) Rules 2022.

The EC further said that it is not mandatory to provide Aadhaar numbers for linking with the electoral roll, and it is considering issuing 'appropriate clarificatory changes' in enrolment forms to reflect this.

In 2022, the then Union law minister Kiren Rijiju told the Lok Sabha that linking Aadhaar with the Voter ID is voluntary, adding electors without an Aadhaar number could 'provide other optional documents as provided in the Form 6B'.

According to him, the Election Laws (Amendment) Act, 2021, allows Electoral Registration Officers to require the voter to provide their Aadhaar number for identification. However, this is voluntary, he said.

The Tuesday meeting comes amid allegations of voter ID number duplication and fudging of electoral roll data levelled by the Opposition, including the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the Congress.

Several other opposition parties have also demanded a discussion on the EPIC number duplication.

Trinamool MP Sagarika Ghose on Saturday said the statements by the poll panel earlier over the duplicate EPIC numbers and this meeting being called now, are "face-saving measures". She added that the TMC will keep a strict vigil till the next state elections.

"First, three statements. Now this meeting. This is just a face-saving measure. We will keep a hawk-eye vigil till the elections," Ghose said.

EC STANCE

- On March 2, EC said identical EPIC numbers or series were allotted to some electors from different states and UTs due to a "decentralised and manual mechanism" before shifting of the electoral roll database of all states to ERONET platform.
- In another statement, the EC said that since the allotment of the EPIC series in 2000, some Electoral Registration Officers did not use the correct series
- Allotment of duplicate numbers due to incorrect series could not have been detected as the states/UTs were independently managing the electoral roll databases, EC said

'Polymorphic malware', new headache for cyber police; victims lost ₹2.9Kcr in 2024

RISHITA KHANNA @Bengaluru

WHILE Karnataka ramped up its fight against cybercrime by appointing 16 cyber technicians, fraudsters have found new ways to stay ahead. Cybercriminals are now using 'polymorphic malware,' a virus that constantly alters its code to evade detection. This evolving threat has made it even harder for investigators to crack cybercrime cases, with only 1,248 of the 20,092 cases detected in 2024, a year when victims lost nearly Rs 2,900 crore to cybercrimes.

Unlike traditional malware, polymorphic malware, which police officials call as a 'digital chameleon' keeps changing its form while spreading, making it difficult for antivirus programs to detect because every time it infects a new device, it looks different from before. Traditional security systems rely on recognizing fixed patterns, but polymorphic malware hides its identity by modifying its code, encrypting itself, or scrambling its structure.

To keep up with cybercrime, Karnataka, the first state to establish a cybercrime police station, is now planning to upgrade its Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) with the latest tools. Since 2019, the state has trained 176 judicial officers and 984 police personnel, while 3,799 other officials have undergone online training. Despite these efforts, the biggest challenge in detecting cybercrime lies in the 'outdated cybersecurity' tools.

Currently, the state relies on "signature-based cybersecurity systems," which function like a police database that can only identify known criminals. These systems detect threats by comparing files against a stored list of virus "signatures"—unique patterns of previously identified malware. P3

Home Minister G Parameshwara at the Cybercrime Investigation Summit-2025 in Bengaluru on Saturday | EXPRESS

EXPERIENCE A FIT THAT FEELS LIKE A SECOND SKIN!
Inners for Winners
RAMRAJ
VESTS
BRIEFS • TRUNKS
Available at Ramraj Showrooms & All Leading Textile Shops

Visa revoked for Palestine protest, Indian student at Columbia Univ self-deports

JAYANTH JACOB @New Delhi

AN Indian student at Columbia University, Ranjani Srinivasan, has self-deported from the US after her student visa was revoked for taking part in pro-Palestine protests.

The US Department of Homeland Security confirmed that Ranjani's visa was revoked on March 5 due to her involvement in supporting Hamas, which is a "designated terrorist organisation" in the US. It went on to furnish video evidence of her using the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) app to self-deport on March 11.

Self-deporting allows individuals to leave voluntarily before facing formal deportation, thereby avoiding the possibility of being forcibly removed, as has been the case with other deportees recently sent back to India who had come to the US as illegal immigrants.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem shared a video of Ranjani at the airport, stating that anyone "advocating for violence and terrorism should not be in the country".

"It is a privilege to be granted a visa to live and study in the United States of America. When you advocate for violence and terrorism, that privilege should be revoked, and you should not be in this country. I am glad to see one of the Columbia University terrorist sympathizers use the CBP Home app to self-deport," she said in a post on X.

Rajani holds a Bachelor's Degree from CEPT University in Ahmedabad and a Master's Degree from Harvard, where she was awarded the Fulbright Nehru and Inlaks Scholarships. She has also worked for an environmental advocacy nonprofit in Washington.

Videograb of Indian student Ranjani Srinivasan leaving the US on her own after her visa was revoked | PTI

GOLD SMUGGLING CASE

Ranya: I am innocent, DRI officers tortured me in custody

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

KANNADA actor **Ranya Rao**, 33, who was arrested at KIA after she was found carrying 14.8 kg of gold bars on March 3, has claimed that she is innocent and has been falsely implicated in the case. In a letter to the Additional Director General (ADG) of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) written on March 6 from Bengaluru Central Prison, Ranya claimed that nothing has been recovered from her and that she has been implicated in the case to protect some other passengers.

Ranya claimed that she was not searched and no mazhar was conducted as stated by investigating officers.

The letter submitted to the DRI through the prison department has been making the rounds a day after the Special Court for Economic Offences dismissed her bail plea. TNSE could not confirm the veracity of the letter.

Chief Superintendent of Bengaluru Central Prison K Suresh sent the letter to the DRI on March 7.

In the four-page letter in English, Ranya stated that they (DRI officers) apprehended her from inside the aircraft and from that time till she was produced before the court, she was hit and slapped for about 15 times by the officers whom she can identify. Unable to bear the pressure and torture, she signed around 60 pages of statement and around 40 blank pages. Ranya alleged that DRI officers forced her to starve and did not allow her to sleep while in custody. She requested the ADG not to consider her statements recorded after her arrest till she was produced before the court. She mentioned her Under Trial Prisoner (UTP) number as 2198/25

Meanwhile, the court adjourned the hearing of the bail petition of Tarun Konduru Raju, a close associate of Ranya, to Monday. P6

DGP Rao ordered to go on leave

The state government on Saturday ordered DGP K Ramachandra Rao, Chairman and Managing Director of Karnataka State Police Housing and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd., and step-father of actor Ranya Rao, to go on compulsory leave. KV Sharath Chandra, ADGP, Recruitment, has been given concurrent charge of Rao's post with immediate effect.

Joshi seeks answers from state govt

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said names of ministers are coming out in the case, but the government has remained silent. "There are such questions that need to be answered," he told reporters. P6

Mitganahalli: A ticking waste bomb defused for now

MOHAMMED YACOOB @Bengaluru

THE agitation by people of villages around Mitganahalli, which showed all signs of getting intense, seems to have subsided for now.

The agitators, who prevented several trucks carrying garbage from entering the landfill at Mitganahalli for two days, decided to withdraw their agitation on certain conditions to which the BBMP agreed.

Many residents of Mitaganahalli, 25 km from Bengaluru, alleged that BBMP has been dumping hundreds of tonnes of unsegregated garbage at the landfill daily since 2012. This led to leachate formation and unbearable stench not only at Mitganahalli, but also at Kannur and nearby villages.

"Hundreds of people from Mitganahalli, Kannur and nearby villages stopped the BBMP trucks and protested for two days. However, they withdrew their protest after officials from BBMP and Bangalore Solid Waste Management Limited (BSWML) held talks and assured them of fixing issues such as leachate leak and foul smell," said Ashwathappa from Mitganahalli.

He said the 50-acre landfill is close to Mitganahalli where over 800 people reside. The stench emanating from the landfill is now unbearable and many face health issues. The landfill becomes a breeding ground for mosquitoes and houseflies whenever it rains. P2

MUMBAI WIN WPL TITLE AGAIN

Mumbai Indians' players celebrate a wicket against Delhi Capitals in WPL final. MI won the match by eight runs | SPORTSPICS | P13

EXPRESS READ

Police see Pak hand in temple grenade attack

Chandigarh: A bomb blast outside Thakurdwara temple in Amritsar's Khandwala area late Friday night rattled the local community. The explosion was caused by a grenade thrown by two bike-borne men around 12.35 am. Punjab Police suspect the involvement of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in the attack.

Man kills sons over academics, hangs self

Kakinada: A 37-year-old ONGC employee allegedly killed his two minor sons over their 'poor academic performance' before dying by suicide in Kakinada city on Saturday. Police said the man tied the hands and legs of his sons and forcibly drowned them in buckets of water. He then hanged himself | P5

INSIDE EDGE

Will continue to play as long as I have fun and enjoy it, says Kohli

SWAROOP SWAMINATHAN @Bengaluru

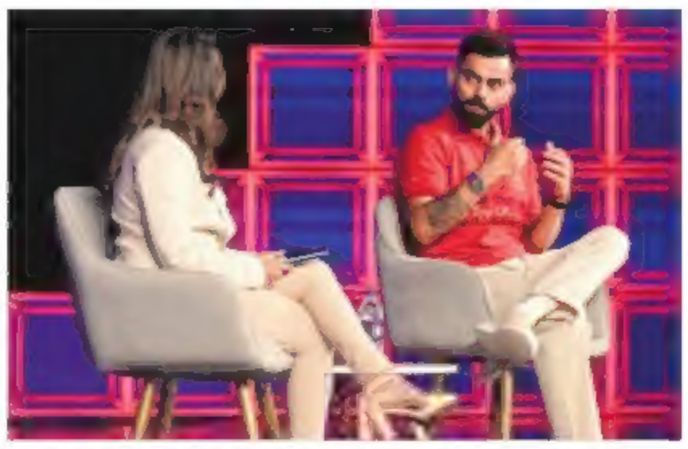
DURING Virat Kohli's fireside chat with Isa Guha, the former India captain raised his index and middle-fingers to form a 'V' sign — the universal peace symbol — before sporting a wide grin. "I'm pretty happy where I'm right now," he said during an RCB event. More than that he spoke about retirement, the one topic everyone is interesting with right now.

Twenty minutes either side of that moment, Kohli spoke on a wide variety of subjects ranging from retirement, leadership, family, social media and being in the present.

On the subject of retirement and what motivates him these days, Kohli said: "I'm (very peaceful and calm)," he said. "Me playing is not for achievement. It's for the joy, enjoyment and love for the game. As long as that is intact, I will continue to play. I have to be honest about that with myself... at this point of time in my life, I feel pretty happy. I still love playing the game."

He was also effusive in his praise for how women's sport has developed in India. "In two seasons of the Women's Premier League, you see a completely different women's game today," he said. "And it's going to keep growing, it's so very important because you can't just cater to looking at men. It has to be collective, sports culture influences everyone and women's sport is a massive part of it. We have so much talent in women's sports and not just cricket. We have great individual athletes in tennis, badminton, wrestling, boxing... it's been amazing."

However, he firmly shut the door on the prospect of making an international comeback in the game's shortest format to have a shot of playing the Olympics. "The Indian Premier League (IPL) has definitely played a big role in that as well, it has gotten us to a stage where it's part of the Olympics. It's a great opportunity for some of our guys." But the 36-year-old, who doesn't usually do public speaking events especially with the press corps present, had his tongue firmly in his cheek when he said 'maybe if we are playing for the gold medal, I may just sneak in for one game (smile). But I think it's a great thing. To be Olympic champions would be a magnificent feeling." P13



Former India captain Virat Kohli spoke during an event in Bengaluru on Saturday